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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: IRAQI GOVERNMENT, CONSTITUTION;
BAGHDAD

SUMMARY: Discussions on the Constitution was the major editorial theme of the daily newspapers on August 22, 2005.
END SUMMARY.

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SELECTED COMMENTARIES

[1A.](#) "Constitutional Discussions"
(Al-Adala Newspaper (Affiliated with The Supreme Council of Iraqi Revolution in Iraq - SCRI) in Arabic P 3 Editorial by Ali Khalif)

"The current discussions on the constitution among the Iraqi politicians represent a very important step in Iraq's journey to democracy. However, it seems as though every political group is trying to impose its own agenda on the constitution . . . There are some who hold political opinions that do not serve the Iraqi national interest. For example, those who oppose the idea of federalism in Iraq might have accepted it if they had natural resources in their own provinces. If we believe in democracy and freedom we must not be afraid of federalism . . . But I think that some political groups in Iraq are selfish and because of that they try to dominate all other groups. These are the groups that accept the idea of Kurdish federalism while at the same time refuse the concept of establishing federal territories in any other part of Iraq . . . Nevertheless, the current constitutional process represents a great achievement and the Iraqi politicians who have taken the lead in this process must complete the task of drafting a constitution that meets the needs of all Iraqi people. We do not like anyone to make use of this achievement to make it a platform to launch bombastic slogans. The Iraqi people want to live in peace and they want to enjoy their fair share of Iraqi wealth and natural resources."

[1B.](#) "Why Are We Afraid of Federalism"
(Al-Sabah Newspaper (affiliated with the Hezbollah movement) in Arabic p. 2 Editorial By Sa'eed Abdul Hadi)

"Until yesterday, federalism was an obstacle in the way of reaching an agreement on the constitution draft. As everyone knows there is a Shiite-Kurdish agreement on federalism. However, the Sunnis call for non-centralism of provinces and totally refuse federalism. The Arab Sunnis think that federalism will lead to the unfair distributing of natural resources among provinces. We do not know the reason behind such fear since the Iraqi politicians unanimously agreed on the distribution of natural resources . . . The Western media focuses on the positive points of federalism and how important it is for Iraq's development. The conservative Pan Arab media outlets severely attack federalism in Iraq. We feel that they attack federalism in Iraq because they want to defend their own political establishment. Those establishments would be threatened if federalism succeeded in Iraq . . . The Arab countries are still governed by tyrannical regimes. Those regimes give a very good picture of what is called as the eastern tyranny. The so-called progressive Arab press opposes the rights of Iraqis to establish their own federalism. Administrative federalism in Iraq is necessary because it would restore the confidence of our many ethnic groups. We must not say bad things about each other. We must not say things like; Sunnis refuse federalism because they want to implement a nationalist Arab project for the sake of our neighbors or accuse the Shiites of being involved in an Iranian plan in Iraq. These accusations come from those who want to destroy Iraqi confidence and encourage sectarianism . . . What will the Shiites lose if a central government was established

that represented the majority in Iraq? What will the minority Sunnis benefit from having a central government? There must be a national movement in Iraq and honest Arab writers must support this move . . . Iraq is moving forward and the democratic process will never stop. Disagreements among Iraq's Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds are a healthy point in this process."

C. "The Disagreement Points are Increasing"
(Al-Fourat Newspaper (independent, Anti-Coalition) in Arabic P 2 Editorial By Majed Fadhel Al-Zaboon)

"Despite the Constitution Drafting Committee's announcement that the political parties working on the Constitution have resolved their differences and reached an agreement, it seems that there are still arguing . . . In fact they are still trying to reach an agreement on sixty-six different points. How did six points of disagreement turn into sixty-six points of disagreement? . . . One of my colleagues thought that members of the Constitution Drafting Committee would not be able to read the constitution articles because there is no electricity where he lives. He lives far away from the International Zone so he knows nothing about the concrete walls and unlimited electricity. My other colleague thought that they should schedule their discussions about the disagreement points. The problem with that solution is that Arabs want a schedule according to the Arabic alphabetic and the Kurds want the Kurdish alphabetic, the same goes for others political groups . . . Ambassador Khalilzad, our American brother, suggested that they use the English alphabetic. Everyone respects his wisdom and they liked the idea. However, he decided to add more articles to the Iraqi constitution draft. When some of the Constitution Drafting Committee members protested, he used his veto against them! He has the right to do so because the United States is a permanent member in the International Security Council . . . This is why the members of the Constitution Security Council accept his very democratic additions. They accent the federalism, and fit into the regional standards that are right for Iraq. They were so happy with Ambassador Khalilzad that they applauded him."

*Translators note: the author is actually sarcastically criticizing the US involvement in writing the Iraqi constitution.

D. "This Morning"
(As-Sabah Al-Jadeed Newspaper (Independent) in Arabic P. 1 Editorial by Ismael Zayyer)
"The completed constitution will begin the next stage in our country's development. So, do not worry about Qatar. Do not waste time on others issue or other groups and their campaigns against us. Go ahead brothers and ensure our children's future . . . This does not mean that you should be careless and accept anyone's opinion into the Constitution. But we should stand behind our own opinions about this historical document. It will establish the basic elements for the government in the new Iraq . . . It is our basic rights to participate in the referendum and vote for the constitution. It does not matter what your vote. The most important thing is that we are free to express our opinions. But we should first read the document and understand what it means. We should also discuss the issues raised in this document. Then we are prepared to express our opinion toward it . . . If we reject any interference in our affairs, and refuse to allow the foreigner to remain on our land, we should show the world that we are a nation that says what it means and has the courage to express its opinions. Casting a vote on the constitution is the first step for national, Arab, and international recognition. It is the first step toward reconstruction."

E. "Dividing Iraq Away from the National Zeal"
(Al-Mashriq Newspaper (Independent, Anti-Coalition) in Arabic P7 Editorial by Shamil Abdul Qader)

"Some Iraqis have two main ideas about the unity of Iraq. One is that Iraq cannot be divided, and two is that dividing Iraq would be an attack against the efforts of the United States to maintain Iraqi unity. However, most Iraqis believe that Iraq will be divided. They think that the governments of Western and Middle Eastern countries have planned all along to divide Iraq for the benefit of Middle Eastern forces. The people who love Iraq and its unity view federalism as a step backward under the pretext of protecting it from a centralized government . . . The former United States Civil Administrator for Iraq Ambassador Paul Bremmer repeated many times that he refused federalism based on sectarian issues. He maintained that he agreed with geographical federalism. That means that Iraq will be turned into 18 federal territories instead of 18 provinces . . . All Iraqis understand that Iraq needs a centralized government for security. We wonder if Al-Ja'afari's government will give us the centralization of the former regime. Iraqis will destroy the idea of division. Their anger will come down on the heads of Iraq's enemies and on

the heads of those who are trying to finance its division."

1F. "What is the Argument For the Constitution?
(Al-Ittihaad Newspaper (ant-coalition, independent) in
Arabic P 5 Editorial by Karekar Abdullah Khushanoo)
"In today's session of the Transitional National Assembly,
the Constitution will either be decided or refused . . . In
support of the Constitution, many press statements have been
issued, and there have been many meetings for the leaders of
the political blocks. Everyone is working on the
Constitution's controversial issues. The TNA will present
the results to the Iraqi people. However, they are bored
with the issue and do not want to another postponement . . .
The leaders of the political blocks have issued statements
about the significant restrictions facing them. If they are
able to come to an agreement on the constitution draft, that
very act will save Iraq. The completed constitution will
open up new horizons for the Iraqi people and will kick
start reconstruction. The people need a break from the
their current miserable condition . . . When the Political
Blocks Leaders complete the draft, it will need the approval
of the TNA. If the Assembly does not approve the draft the
political process goes back to the beginning. It will be
destructive to the Iraqi people in many ways. The
political, economic, security and social consequences of a
denial will dishearten the people. It will also mean that
after two years of continued suffering, that included a
dangerous election, they only gained a few benefits . . .
The elected National Assembly should have finished the
constitution through the efforts of the Constitution
Drafting Committee by the first deadline. But it failed to
reach an accord. That fact compelled the president to have
the political blocks to sit together in order to solve the
restrictions . . . The statements are continuing, some are
optimistic and some are pessimistic that the document will
be finished. A decision from the TNA decision will remove
these all doubts that the government is serious about the
future . . . We still optimistic that the TNA will give us
our final draft, if we do not get the draft the country will
sink into chaos and face continued foreign intervention in
our internal issues . . . Iraqis want a constitution that
will protect their rights, protect their country, and ensure
a bright future for their children. We are waiting for the
National Assembly to decide the constitution, prepare the
referendum and hold the elections."

Khalilzad